

who, in the fourteenth century, again and again rose in revolt, the mediaeval artisan, especially in backward countries like England, was a small master. The formation of temporary organizations, or "parliaments" of wage-earners, which goes on in London even before the end of the thirteenth century,¹⁹ and the growth of journeymen's associations in the later Middle Ages, are a proof that the conditions which produced modern trade unionism were not unknown. But even in a great city like Paris the 128 guilds which existed at the end of the thirteenth century appear to have included 5,000 masters, who employed not more than 6,000 to 7,000 journeymen. At Frankfurt-am-Main in 1387 actually not more than 750 to 800 journeymen are estimated to have been in the service of 1,554 masters.⁸⁰

In cities of this kind, with their freedom, their comparative peace, and their strong corporate feeling, large enough to be prolific of associations and small enough for each man to know his neighbour, an ethic of mutual aid was not wholly impossible, and it is in the light of such conditions that the most characteristic of mediaeval industrial institutions is to be interpreted. To suggest that anything like a majority of mediaeval workers were ever members of a craft guild is extravagant. In England, at any rate,

more than nine-
tenths were peasants, among whom,
though friendly
societies called guilds were common, there
was naturally
no question of craft organization.
Even in the
towns it is a question whether there was
not a con-
siderable population of casual workers—
consider only
the number of unskilled workers that must
have been
required as labourers by the
craftsmen building a
cathedral in the days before mechanical
cranes—who
were rarely organized in permanent
societies. To
invest the craft guilds with a halo of economic
chivalry
is not less inappropriate. They were,
first and fore-
most, monopolists, and the cases in which
their vested